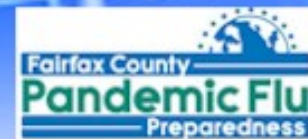# Integrating Pandemic Flu Elements Into Your Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan

Planning Checklist

County of Fairfax, Virginia

Appropriate Authority to Develop a Plan

- Assign key staff with the authority to develop and maintain a pandemic influenza preparedness and response plan
  - Form a committee to work on the plan
  - Identify staff who have broad knowledge of the agency
  - Appoint the decision-making authority
  - Express the importance of planning for Pandemic Flu to the organization

Document the Plan

- Document in writing all decisions and procedures
  - Create a Pandemic Influenza Plan notebook
- Determine how to keep the plan up-to-date
  - Determine who will update the plan and how often
- Determine who will have copies of the plan

Impact of Pandemic Influenza on Service Delivery

- Determine the potential impact of a pandemic on your organization's usual activities and services
  - Plan for up to 50% of staff being absent due to illness, caring for a sick relative, or self quarantine
  - Plan for situations likely to require increasing, decreasing or altering the services your organization delivers

Essential Business Functions

□ Identify the business functions that must remain operational at all times and under any circumstances

- Identify the processes and services that support the essential functions

- Prioritize the essential functions based on the amount of time the essential function can be suspended before it adversely affects the agency's core mission

- Consider minimizing or changing the mission to reflect ability to provide services with lessened staff

Essential Positions

☐ Identify the critical positions needed to support your essential functions

- Train staff to perform the work needed to carry on your organization's work during a pandemic
- Include cross-training for staff to fill other roles

Essential Positions

- Establish a written line of succession for key positions
  - Identify key contacts with multiple back-ups
  - Have clear roles and responsibilities
  - Make sure key personnel know who is supposed to report to whom

Delegation of Authority

□ Determine how authority will be delegated or transitioned during a pandemic epidemic

- Identify staff who will have the authority to activate and act upon the plan during a pandemic event

- Identify personnel who will have the authority to redeploy staff to support essential services, delegate authority to backup staff, and take essential services offline and bring them back online

Service and Operation Methods

- ☐ Determine how you will assess service demand
- ☐ Consider how you can offer services in non-traditional ways
- ☐ Determine how you will bring some services off-line during an event and back on-line after the event
- ☐ Determine the procedures that will be used to return to normal operations
- ☐ Consider what policies/laws may need to be altered to accommodate a different service methodology

Critical Records, Equipment, and Databases

- Identify the critical records, equipment, and systems needed to make the essential functions operable

  - Determine the amount of time a system can be unavailable before it must be brought back online

    - Determine the threshold for how much time could pass where lost data will not be recovered (For example, the last 24 hours of data entered before a system failure will not be recovered.)

Critical Records, Equipment, and Databases

- Develop backup procedures in case your critical systems are not available

- Develop an inventory of essential equipment

- Determine if a backup location is needed in case you need to relocate during an event

Access to Critical Files, Records, and Databases

- Determine how employees could access vital files, records, databases needed to support essential services:
    - Removable Drives, Citrix, Phone, Hard Copy Records, On-Line, etc
    - Ensure that essential staff have access to these methods before an event occurs
- Prepare emergency kits for the agency
    - Include copies of the plan, phone trees, essential human resources and payroll information, hard copies of vital files/records, a laptop (with peripherals) loaded with essential systems

Critical Supplies

□ Evaluate what are the most critical supplies that might not be available from suppliers

 ■ Identify alternate suppliers for your critical supplies

 ■ Include basic office supplies in your planning, not just those related to your service delivery

Leave Policy Considerations

- Develop a leave policy that addresses the needs of symptomatic personnel as well as facility staffing needs
  - Establish policies for employee compensation and sick leave absences unique to a pandemic (e.g., non-punitive, liberal leave), including policies when a previously ill person is no longer infectious and can return to work after illness
  - Establish policies for flexible worksite (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)

Communication

- Develop a communication strategy
  - Determine how you will communicate the plan to all staff
  - Determine how you will communicate with critical staff during the event
    - How will activation of the plan be communicated?
    - Develop a phone tree for all personnel in your organization
  - Share the communication plan with clients and service providers that support the organization

Infection Control in the Workplace

- Encourage the practice of infection control strategies to protect the workplace
    - Post signs displaying respiratory etiquette and proper hand washing method in all public areas
    - Provide hand sanitizers, tissues and receptacles in all public waiting areas and staff break rooms
    - Send any employee with a cough illness home and encourage them to avoid crowds while ill
    - Encourage employees to stay home when sick

Employee Personal Preparedness

- Encourage employees to be prepared at home (for example, arranging child care in advance, preparing emergency kits)
  - Being prepared at home will allow the employee to be at work
- Encourage employees to get a flu shot every year
- Encourage employees to practice infection control at work and at home

Coordinate Ahead of Time with External Organizations

- Understand the roles of federal, state, and local public health agencies and emergency respondents
  - Understand what to expect and what not to expect for each in the event of a pandemic
- Develop a list of points of contact for external organizations, including government contacts

Coordinate Ahead of Time with External Organizations

- Communicate with local government agencies about the assets and/or services your organization could contribute to the community during a pandemic

- Identify organizations that provide similar services
  - Establish partnerships and create memoranda of understanding
  - Consider cross-training staff to fill gaps at other organizations

Testing the Plan

□ Test your COOP plan using an exercise or drill, and review and revise your plan as needed

  ■ Determine how your agency will test the plan (For example, can a tabletop exercise sufficiently test the plan?)

  ■ Determine the frequency of testing